



# Report to the 29th District

## Representative Steve Conway

2002 Session

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Finance

Health Care

Joint Committee on  
Pension Policy  
- *Vice Chairman*

Joint Committee on  
Veterans and Military  
Affairs

Dear Friend and Neighbors,

The 2002 legislative session is over on time! We can thank the breaking of political deadlock in the House of Representatives. Unlike last year, we ended the 2002 Session on time and completed some business important to our district.

Keep in mind, unlike last year, we faced serious problems this session – a deepening economic recession and record declines in state revenue – over \$1.4 billion revenue loss. Washington State lost over 60,000 jobs and faced the highest levels of unemployment since 1993. In Pierce County alone, we suffered losses of over 2000 jobs.

The Legislature responded to this crisis by passing a balanced budget based on no new tax increases. We passed a Supplemental Capital Budget of approximately \$120 million, which will help stimulate our economy and create new jobs — many in Pierce County. We also passed the Second Tacoma Narrows Bridge construction project, which is estimated to create 500 new construction jobs. In addition, we approved \$40 million in job training spending to address the growing needs of our laid-off workforce. Job training is a smart investment policy during a recession.

We submitted the statewide transportation package, including the 9-cent gas tax increase, to the ballot. When the transportation package came before me, I saw two pressing needs: road safety and jobs. I supported the measure because I believe we must invest in roads like we invest in education. Future economic opportunity and jobs for our children and grandchildren rests on the investments we make today. Washington's family-wage economy demands transportation investments.

State revenue losses meant across-the-board cuts in all state programs. Overall our schools were protected as were many programs serving our most vulnerable citizens. Our state workforce was reduced and their pay frozen for a year. We softened this impact by granting our state workforce the right to bargain over wages and benefits, and insuring spending goes to those our state agencies serve, and not toward greater bureaucracy.

As Chairman of the House Commerce & Labor Committee, I steered several critical bills toward passage: family care rights, protection for nurses and firefighters, unemployment insurance, tax reform and worker safety legislation. This session, we passed some of the most important legislation for working families since 1993.

I was also able to ensure that Pierce County would not be the only county to shoulder the burden of housing violent sex predators. Six other counties will be required to take their 'fair share' of these offenders. We also passed important criminal penalty enhancements to address the growing problem of car theft and meth labs.

To me, the greatest disappointment of the 2002 Legislature was its failure to pass legislation to control the increasing cost of prescription drugs. Most state legislative bodies have taken steps to address increasing health care costs and access for their citizens. I sponsored a bill to achieve this end, but it died during the last days of the session. Controlling the cost of prescription drugs must be the priority for the next session of the legislature.

I am proud the House of Representatives was able to get so much accomplished in this short 60-day session. Not only did we break gridlock, balance the state, but we were able to pass important legislation that will positively impact our district.

Always,

Rep. Steve Conway

# Rep. Steve Conway

## The Budget

Washington State is suffering from the most serious recession since 1993. Due to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>, our revenue is down by over \$1 billion. With hard work and dedication we rebalanced our budget. This was no easy feat. It took \$680 million in unavoidable cuts to important services. We asked state agencies to help tighten their belts by cutting 5 percent of their budgets. The remainder of the budget deficit was solved by increasing revenues through the repeal of several tax exemptions, expansion of our lottery system and by using tobacco settlement money. The use of the tobacco settlement money was a choice, but a better alternative than making further cuts in services or increase new taxes during a recession.



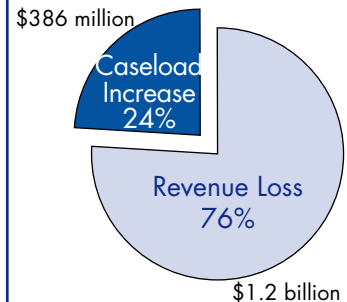
## Capital Budget

The House of Representatives passed the Capitol Budget with strong Democratic support. This economic stimulus plan will invest money in colleges, fish hatcheries, crime labs, and other public facilities — ultimately creating 20,000 jobs and making our communities a better place to live.

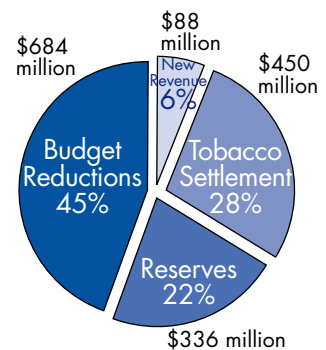
Among the investments affecting residents of the 29<sup>th</sup> legislative district are:

- \$ 500,000 for the Stewart Heights South End pool
- \$ 1,010,000 for Bates Technical College renovations
- \$ 2,354,000 for Tacoma Community College facility repairs
- \$ 250,000 for the William H. Factory Small Business Incubator in East Tacoma
- \$ 50,000 Asian Pacific Cultural Center

## The Budget Problem



## The Budget Solution



## Transportation Fixing the Transportation Mess

By far the most critical challenge of the 2002 legislative session was addressing our critical transportation needs. We passed four transportation bills to address this issue:

- **The Supplemental Transportation Budget (HB 2451)** based on current gasoline taxes, provides funding for starting a second Tacoma Narrows Bridge project. This project is expected to create 500 new jobs in Pierce County.
- **The Regional Transportation Budget (E2SSB 6140)** allows Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties to create a new transportation authority to address traffic congestion.
- **The Transportation Efficiencies Law (HB 2304)** directs changes in the Department of Transportation to make the agency more efficient and accountable.
- **The Statewide Transportation Referendum (ESHB 2960)**, if passed by voters in November, will increase

the gas tax by 9-cents — 5-cents in January of 2003 and 4 cents in 2004. This 10-year, \$7.6 billion transportation plan will invest \$4.8 billion for congestion relief and road safety on state highways, and \$1.2 billion for alternative transportation choices including buses, rail, and passenger-only ferries.

If the referendum passes in November, our district is slated to receive:

- Funding for the design of a new road connecting I-5 to State Route 7 (Cross-Base Highway).
- Project funding, which will create HOV lanes in  
1) Tacoma/Pierce County from the Tacoma/King County line to SR-512 on I-5.  
2) I-5 to Gig Harbor on SR 16.
- Funding earmarked for reconstruction of the I-5/SR-16 interchange at Nalley Valley to improve the flow of traffic, reduce back-ups from accidents, and relieve a congestion chokepoint.
- Additional dollars for the Port of Tacoma to address freight mobility, including funding for an I-5/SR 167 connecting freeway

# Report to the 29th District



## Employment and Labor

As Chairman of the Commerce & Labor Committee, I am proud of the legislation that passed through my committee. The bills that were passed protect the well-being of working families.



1. **The Unemployment Insurance** bill (EHB 2901) reforms the unemployment insurance system by stabilizing taxes and by assisting unemployed workers with training benefits. It invests \$40 million for worker retraining.
2. **The Family Care Act** (SSB 6426) expands the right of working families in Washington State to use their earned sick leave to care both for seriously ill children, as well as a spouse, parents, parents-in-law or grandparents.

3. **The Unemployment Insurance for Victims of Domestic Violence** (HB 1248) bill provides unemployment insurance to individuals who have to leave their place of employment because of domestic violence or stalking situations.

4. **The Fire Fighters Occupational Disease Act** (2SHB 2663) allows firefighters exposed to diseases and chemicals on the job to be covered under the industrial insurance law.



5. **The Overtime for Nurses** (ESB 6675) bill sets limits on the mandatory overtime that registered nurses and licensed practical nurses are required to work by their hospitals. This is a patient safety issue.
6. **The Collective Bargaining for State Employees** (HB 1268) bill gives state workers the right to collective bargaining for wages, hours, benefits and working conditions. State employees have been fighting for the right to collective bargain since 1988.
7. **The Teaching Assistant Collective Bargaining** (ESH 2540) bill allows teaching assistants enrolled in educational programs at the University of Washington the right to bargain. Equally as important was the passage of **HB 2403**, which establishes procedures allowing 4-year faculty the right to bargain over their wages, hours, and terms and conditions.

## Prescription Drugs

Prescription drugs costs are shamefully high in this country as compared to Canada. Unfortunately SB 6368 Prescription Drug Reform, a very important piece of legislation, did not pass. This bill would have allowed the state to purchase drugs for all citizens and groups to leverage lower prices from the pharmaceutical manufacturers. It would have also encouraged the use of the most clinically and cost effective drugs. The state of Washington currently spends about 1.5 billion on prescription drugs—this is as big as our state budget deficit.

This issue is critical to both the state budget and your budget. We must find a solution!



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## Criminal Justice

### Car Theft

Important legislation was passed that increases penalties for car thieves. Under the new law (SB 6490), stealing cars in the first degree will carry higher penalties.

### Meth Labs

Several key pieces of legislation to curb meth labs also passed:

- 1) **HB 2610** — created a new crime related to exposing a child to meth or meth precursors.
- 2) **SB 6233 and SB 6232** – created technical revisions to last year's meth legislation to respond to a Court of Appeals decision and other technical issues. Additionally, \$1.3 million of Federal Byrne Grant Fund money is appropriated to support multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces, and for methamphetamine reduction and response.

### Drug Sentencing Reform

Equally important is a new drug sentencing reform law (HB 2338) allowing non-violent drug offenders the choice to complete a comprehensive drug court treatment program or face conviction and a prison term. This will ultimately save the state millions of dollars.

## Good Legislation for Veterans

The 2002 Legislative Session addressed and passed legislation that is very important to our veterans.

**EHB 2453** exempts veterans discharge papers from public records disclosure provided the veteran requests this exemption.

**SSB 5097** allows the POW/MIA flag to be displayed in public buildings on specific days.

**Senate Bill 5626** expands the definition of Veteran to include those in the National Guard reserves who serve overseas as well as those who served in the Philippine Armed Forces and Scouts in World War II. The new definition allows these members of the armed forces to receive some veteran benefits.



These are some of the laws that passed during the 2002 legislative session to help our district. If you have any questions regarding any of these, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (360) 786-7906 or e-mail [conway\\_st@leg.wa.gov](mailto:conway_st@leg.wa.gov)

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Representative  
**Steve Conway**

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